

## The last-born

Dependent  
Manipulative  
Outgoing

## The middle-born

Relaxed  
Diplomatic  
Realistic

Your order within the family can have profound effects on your personality and how you relate to others.



The first-  
born  
Academically  
successful  
Self-critical

# Birth order where you fit

1st-born? Stuck in the middle? Or a way-free baby? Critical & uncritical  
Linda Blair reveals how birth order can shape you

**F**rom the moment you first draw breath, a number of factors are at work to shape your character. However, there is a simple means of developing an understanding of yourself and others – and it comes down to the position you hold in your family.

Birth order, put into its proper context, is the key that can unlock personalities and give you a perspective on human nature.

Knowing whether a person is the eldest, youngest, middle or only child means you can make a great number of correct guesses about the way the person behaves, thinks and feels.

## The first-born

### THIRSTY FOR APPROVAL

When you were a baby, you enjoyed the exclusive attention of your parents. However, probably within the first four years of your life, you had to start sharing this attention with a new child, experiencing the loss of your parents' undivided focus at an early age.

As a result, your thirst for approval will probably always feel as if it can't be quenched. In other words, no matter how much praise or adoration you receive, you're likely to find yourself wanting more.

Another common consequence is to widen your search for adult praise and approval, wanting to please anyone who occupies a position of power.

You may also be easily hurt by criticism from an authority figure, because it can feel like rejection and trigger your anxiety about being supplanted by someone else.

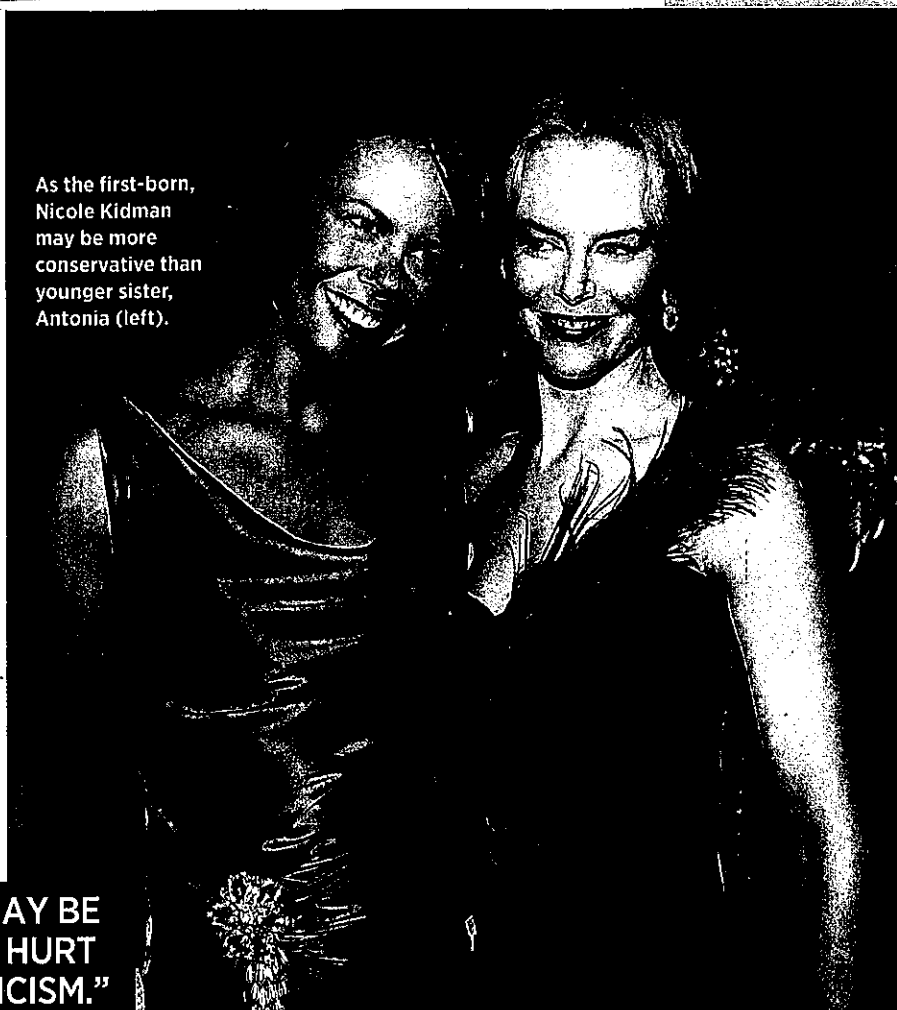
### LAW-ABIDING AND CONSERVATIVE

If you're keen to please those in authority, it follows you'll accept the rules they've set and identify with their values. You're less likely to break the law. You also tend to be conservative, sticking with what you know rather than taking chances.

### KEEN TO BE IN CHARGE

Not only do you admire those in power, but you may want to assume power yourself. Many first-borns are leaders. For example, more presidents, prime ministers and chief executives have been first-borns than would be expected statistically.

As the first-born, Nicole Kidman may be more conservative than younger sister, Antonia (left).



**"YOU MAY BE EASILY HURT BY CRITICISM."**

### ACADEMICALLY SUCCESSFUL

You're a good student: you do your homework and generally accept what authority figures tell you. Primarily, you are driven by the desire to please your parents and teachers. Another reason first-borns do well at school is that they tend to have superior language skills – a result of the extra attention before your siblings arrived.

### ORGANISED AND RESPONSIBLE

You've watched your parents and other carers look after your younger siblings. No doubt, you were also given opportunities to help out. This has not only made you nurturing and caring, but also given you organisational skills that make others want to put you in control.

### SELF-CRITICAL

A deep-seated fear of rejection means you dread failure. And, because you ask so much of yourself, you're less likely to forgive yourself when you don't manage to do what's expected. This tendency towards harsh self-criticism is particularly true if the sibling who comes next was born soon after you – before you lost the belief that you were responsible for everything that happened in your life.

All children think in this way when they are very young: their first reaction when things go

wrong is to assume responsibility. So, although your memories of your sibling's arrival may be hazy, you probably concluded that your parents preferred the new baby because you were now less likeable.

### BAD AT DELEGATING

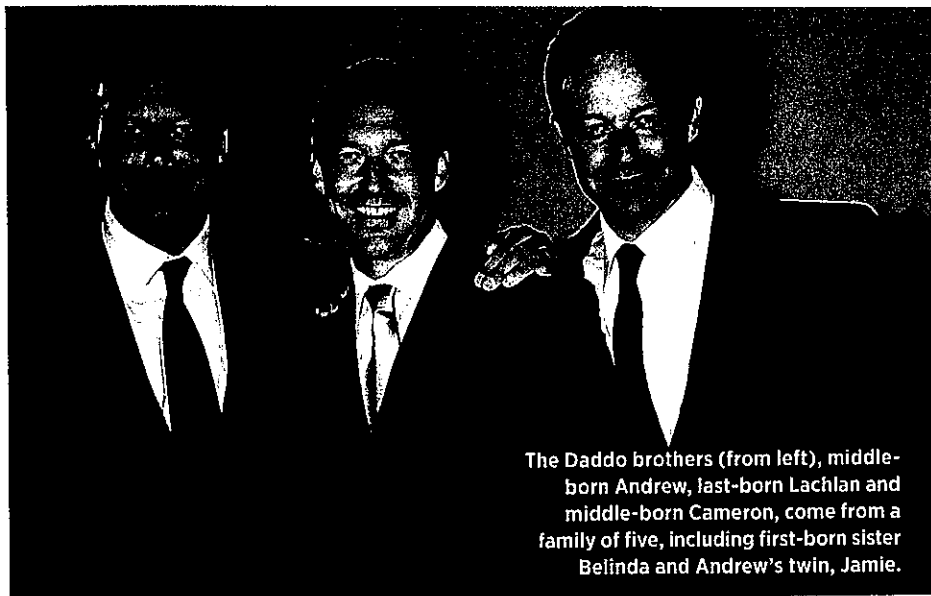
You find it hard to delegate responsibility, preferring to stay in control. Indeed, you are afraid that, if you lose that control, things may go wrong and that if they do, you will only have yourself to blame.

### MORE LIKELY TO SEEK HELP

You are prone to anxiety and feelings of insecurity. This is partly because your parents were novices when you arrived. Babies are acutely sensitive to people's moods, so there is a good chance that you were aware of their nervousness.

Your anxiety is also a result of losing their exclusive focus. How strong and lasting your problems will be depends on your temperament and how your parents handled the arrival of your new sibling.

Consequently, you're more likely to seek psychological help – not least because you tend to turn towards authority figures (such as a GP or psychologist) when you're in distress.



The Daddo brothers (from left), middle-born Andrew, last-born Lachlan and middle-born Cameron, come from a family of five, including first-born sister Belinda and Andrew's twin, Jamie.

## THE MIDDLE-BORN

For families of more than three children, all those in between the first- and last-born fall into this category. If the gap between you and the next child is more than three years, you will probably have qualities typical of a middle- and a last-born.

### RELAXED

By the time you came along, your parents were more confident, so they treated you more matter-of-factly. So you're likely to be less of a worrier than your older sibling.

### DIPLOMATIC

You get on well with most people and are very sensitive to the needs of others. Sandwiched between siblings who

wanted things their own way, you tended to be the one to propose a compromise.

### EASILY PERSUADED

Having grown up surrounded by older and younger siblings, you gravitate toward people your own age. So you are attuned to your peers. However, you can also be inclined to follow the crowd.

### REALISTIC

When you hung around with children the same age, you tended to compare yourself to them. As a result, the expectations you had for yourself were likely to be roughly appropriate for your stage of development. Even as a grown-up, you tend to remain realistic about your own talents and abilities.

### CREATIVE AND SPORTY

Middle-borns nearly always focus their energies in areas where the first-born hasn't been successful. Your older sibling may have worked hard at school, so you had to

think of something else. The second choices most likely to please parents are sport and the arts. So you probably channelled your interest into one or the other.

### FIRST TO LEAVE HOME

Most middle-borns fly the nest relatively earlier than their siblings. Perhaps it is because you grew tired of always compromising for the sake of others.

### CHAMPION OF THE UNDERDOG

Middle-borns try to keep the social wheels greased, but you are less likely to

pay attention to your own needs. If you continually repress your own desires, they are pushed out of your mind. Frustration remains

but you're more likely to channel it into helping others. What you are saying is, in effect: "We all deserve equal treatment. I'm going to help them - just as I would have liked to be noticed and helped."

### UNCONVENTIONAL APPEARANCE

You've probably always had to be innovative to find ways of holding your parents' attention. This may be why you are the one in the family who is most likely to dress bizarrely or wear unusual make-up. It's your way of saying: "Hey, look at me! Come on, notice me!"

### LACK OF DIRECTION

Middle-borns are the least likely to seek psychological help. When they do, though, they most often have symptoms of depression or anxiety - such as tiredness, a lack of direction and panicky feelings. Usually, my work centres on helping them discover their own passions and talents.

**"YOU ARE  
ATTUNED TO  
YOUR PEERS."**

## THE LAST-BORN

### DEPENDENT

Your parents probably decided that you would be their last child. So they were likely to have feelings of nostalgia and regret, and each of your "first" milestones became a significant "last time" for them. And, because they weren't ready to give up the parenting role, they rewarded you when your behaviour was dependent or immature.

On top of this, you had more family members to help you out, which means you probably never had to struggle with a problem on your own. Plus, no new brother or sister came along to take away your role as the "baby" of the family. So you never had any reason to give up your dependent, childish ways. **OUTGOING AND CHARMING**

Last-borns tend to be sociable creatures who enjoy being the centre of attention.

Your older siblings captured your parents' attention by being more mature and showing how well they could learn new skills. So you had to find another way to shine. You discovered attention-seeking antics play very well, particularly with parents encouraging you to prolong your babyish behaviour.

### MANIPULATIVE

Parents often deal with their last-born in an ambivalent manner. They want their youngest to be baby-like and sweet, yet not too much of a bother.

This confusing message often causes the last-born to progress from behaving in a pleasantly attention-seeking way to becoming frustrated and manipulative.

Rather than become mature, the child learns how to "turn on the charm". In its extreme form, this charm becomes outright manipulation.

### DISORGANISED

Because you focus your attention on what others can do for you, you are less likely to set goals for yourself. Furthermore, because you expect others to sort you out, you may never take the time to think about what you are doing. As a result, you often appear undirected.

### CREATIVE AND INNOVATIVE

Being disorganised isn't all bad - in fact, it's linked with creativity. Without carefully constructed plans, we're often

## THE LAST-BORN *continued*

more open to new and different ways of thinking. The reason you have a tendency to be innovative and creative is that, as a child, you had no choice but to break new ground in the battle for your parents' attention.

### REBELLIOUS

If you are breaking new ground, you are also "rebellious" against the conventional. And it's a great deal easier for last-borns to get away with breaking rules and behaving in unconventional ways than it is for older siblings.

### RISK-TAKER

Children will naturally test the limits set for them. Parents, though, tend to relax the boundaries with each successive child – which means that the last-born will have the least limits and therefore be liable to take the riskiest options.

### LOW SELF-ESTEEM

During your childhood, everyone else in your family was bigger, stronger and more competent than you. After all, they had a head start. So, when you compare yourself to your siblings, you are liable to feel less competent. You are also in danger of concluding that it's not worth trying to do things for yourself.

### EASILY DISAPPOINTED

The longer people are taken care of – rather than caring for themselves – the higher the chance that they will feel let down by others in later life.

This is a danger for last-borns. You grew up with an expectation that other people, particularly parental figures, would automatically "know" what you wanted and provide it. Yet, when you began to mix with your peers, you may have been surprised to discover that they expected a more even-handed relationship. Thus you were left feeling let down and disappointed.

A dangerous consequence of this is that, in adulthood, you may start blaming everyone else when things don't go your way.



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## THE ONLY CHILD

Most single children are born to parents who choose to have a one-child family.

If, however, your parents were desperate to have a large family, they're likely to have spoiled and over-protected you. In adulthood, this may lead you to be perpetually dissatisfied and always expecting others to do everything for you.

### ACADEMICALLY SUCCESSFUL

Like first-borns, you do well at school, because you are used to interacting with adults and can express yourself clearly.

Also, because you don't have any siblings, you are less likely to have suffered from anxious or jealous feelings.

### SELF-CONFIDENT

An only child is unlikely to lose parents' exclusive attention. Quite the contrary, you are often showered with love and approval. So you almost certainly developed a healthy level of self-confidence. If you had too much praise, though, it may have led to you feeling pressured.

And, if your mother and father focused too much attention on you, you may have felt over-protected, as though you were living for them rather than for yourself.

In my own clinical experience, though, most parents of singles seem to get the balance right and raise confident, assertive individuals.

### HAPPY ALONE

Unlike children with siblings, you are used to entertaining yourself. This can be a great plus because you are less prone to feel anxious if no one is around.

### LOGICAL AND ORGANISED

Most grown-ups, unlike children, know when to repress their emotions and behave logically. Having grown up around adults, you learned this lesson early.

After all, you never had to put up with siblings who threw tantrums or stirred up negative emotions – such as jealousy or anxiety. Your sensible, unemotional problem-solving skills were likely, therefore, to develop powerfully.

You are probably good at planning ahead, making lists and organising



Natalie Portman  
is an only child.

yourself, and you are also often asked to take on positions of responsibility because of this.

### NOT STREET-SMART

Although parents of single children usually provide their child with opportunities to socialise with their peers, these sessions are likely to be planned, time-limited and supervised by adults.

The downside is that you seldom learn how to stand up for yourself diplomatically and to find ways of sharing toys and space.

So singles often miss out on developing "street-smart" skills – whereas children with

siblings learn to speed-read other people's desires and intended actions.

Consequently, you are more likely to behave in

ways that lead to misunderstandings. You can also feel awkward in group activities.

### PERFECTIONIST

As a child, you tended to set your standards in relation to adults. This means that you will almost certainly expect a great deal of yourself. Yet it's also important to know when to relax. Otherwise, the perfectionist only child will be prone to burnout and other disorders.

### AFRAID OF DISORDER

In larger families, someone is always knocking over someone else's set of blocks, so siblings have plenty of opportunities to figure out what to do when things go wrong and then mediate among themselves.

That wasn't the case for you. When you had a problem, there was usually an adult to help you to sort it out. So you probably grew up with little experience of how to cope with disorder and confusion. Therefore, you can appear to be impatient or demanding when things don't go according to your plan.

My clinical experience suggests an only child is prone to obsessive behaviour. □